



TOWN OF RIDGEFIELD
Fire Department

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March 12, 2007

Heather Burford
Fire Chief
Ridgefield Fire Department
6 Catoonah Street
Ridgefield, CT 06877

Co-Chairs Senator Mary Ann Handley and Representative Peggy Sayers
Public Health Committee
Room 3000, Legislative Office Building
Hartford, CT 06106

Re: **Support for funding of SB 1226: An Act Establishing A Fall Prevention Program**

Dear Senator Handley, Rep. Sayers and members of the Public Health Committee,

As the Fire Chief for the Town of Ridgefield, I am asking you to recommend appropriations to support the activities in Senate Bill 1226. I will not be able to testify at the Public Hearing scheduled for Wednesday, March 14, 2007, but would like you to accept this letter as my written support in lieu of testimony.

As you are aware, the Connecticut fire service is deeply involved in providing medical care to the residents and visitors of our communities. Emergency Medical Services (EMS) account for 72% of the call volume handled by the Ridgefield Fire Department and many of those calls for service pertain to ground level falls suffered by seniors. During the month of July 2006 a staggering 30% of EMS calls were for falls or fall related injuries. The injuries we encounter and treat are often devastating to patients physically, emotionally, and financially.

As a fire chief I am charged with providing a safe community in which the residents of Ridgefield may live, work, and play. Recently while employed in the Town of Manchester I instituted a Fall-Prevention Program with tremendous success resulting in improved education to our seniors and a reduced number of EMS calls related to falls. This preventative approach coupled with funding to support the endeavor is the direction the state needs to take to begin to reduce the devastating effects of falls within our jurisdictions.

Thank you for your consideration of this important public health issue. If you have any questions or need additional information about the impact of falls on our community, please contact me at (203) 431-2727 or at rfdchief@ridgefieldct.org.

Sincerely,



Heather L. Burford

Cc: Senator Judith Freedman